

Shenandoah

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Washington and Lee
University*

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Ollinger Crenshaw

CLIMAX OF RECONCILIATION:

The Lee Centennial at Washington and Lee University

In June of 1902, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., delivered the Phi Beta Kappa address at the University of Chicago entitled, "Shall Cromwell Have a Statue?" of which the theme was a defense of General R. E. Lee's course in 1861. This learned and eloquent oration contained magnanimous passages of appreciation of the Confederate soldier and cause. Coming as it did from the scion of one of America's most notable and historic families, son of Lincoln's Minister to Great Britain, himself a gallant Union soldier and one whose own career exemplified well the Adams family tradition, the Chicago discourse evoked favorable comment from broadminded Northerners, and of course enthusiastic response from Southerners.

Doubtless it was fitting that Thomas Nelson Page, spokesman *par excellence* of the Old South, and a student at Washington College in Lee's time, should voice publicly his acknowledgment to Adams "for his courage, his breadth and the classic dignity of his recent address in advocacy of a monument to Lee." It became appropriate, therefore, that when the authorities of Washington and Lee University besought an orator of the proposed "Lee Centennial" celebration in honor of General Lee's birth, scheduled for January 19, 1907, they should turn to that individual who had most effectively championed sectional reconciliation, Charles Francis Adams, Jr. At a meeting of Camp Frank Paxton, Sons of Confederate Veterans at Lexington, Virginia, in December, 1906, a movement was initiated to set definite plans for the celebration. President Denny

of Washington and Lee, a member of Camp Frank Paxton, announced to the veterans on that occasion that Charles Francis Adams, Jr., distinguished orator and historian, had accepted his invitation to deliver the principal address at the centennial.

Soon the national press became aware of the forthcoming important event to be held at Lexington. The *Chicago Tribune*, which had at times earlier expressed hostility toward the South, published an editorial, "The South Vindicated," in commenting on the forthcoming Lee Centennial. The *Tribune* said of Adams that he had "been noted in recent years for his strong declarations favorable to national appreciation of the character and services of the great Virginian." That paper praised Lee for his refusal to become an obstructionist after Appomattox, and for his services at Washington College. It added that the trend in modern times was to treat with generosity those Southern leaders who had used their energies to restore harmony after the war's end, and concluded that it was fitting that the great-grandson of the "rebel" John Adams, had been selected to "appraise that other great 'rebel' Lee." *Leslie's Weekly* called attention to the spectacle of Charles Francis Adams, the great-grandson of John Adams, the grandson of John Quincy Adams, the son of Charles Francis Adams (and it might have added the brother of Henry, whose fame later almost eclipsed that of the others!), at the bier of Lee.

President Denny sensed the historic importance of the Lee Centennial. He wrote Thomas Nelson Page, whom he urgently but vainly invited to be the principal speaker at the alumni banquet on the night of the 19th: "This is to be a notable event in the history of the country." Dr. Denny's view of the day's significance was widely shared, and the careful preparations were reflected in the success of the occasion, perhaps the most effective of any formal celebration ever held on the Washington and Lee campus.

The nineteenth of January opened bright and mild, continuing throughout to be an ideal winter day. At eleven o'clock in the morning the faculty of Washington and Lee, alumni, and members of the senior class assembled before the Washington building, there forming a procession which marched to the Lee Chapel between members of the other student classes, who lined

each side of the walk leading to the chapel entrance. Inside that somewhat crowded building, the faculty and the alumni of Lee's days sat on the rostrum, various "camps" of Confederate veterans occupied the front rows of the audience, behind them came Washington and Lee seniors, while in other seats were students and visitors. The gallery contained members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The platform was decorated with Confederate, United States, and Virginia flags, together with flowers and Washington and Lee colors.

It was in this setting that President Denny arose to call for prayer, which was offered by the Rector of the University, the Reverend Dr. G. B. Strickler, Captain of the Liberty Hall Volunteers. The assembly then sang what has been called Lee's favorite hymn, "How Firm a Foundation." Dr. Denny thereupon introduced Mr. Adams in brief remarks which the *Rockbridge County News* accurately described as "a model of high thought and forceful expression. . . ." In Dr. Denny's tribute to General Lee, the meaning of that great figure's career and service to Washington College has never been more concisely stated:

To all of us it brings to memory our great President, the greatest man who has ever adorned the presidency of an institution of learning, not merely within Virginia, nor merely within the South, but—I dare also to say—within the limits of the American republic. We believe that, whatever immortality is destined to attend his great career as commander of armies, this work which engaged the last energies of his life and upon which he pronounced his final benediction, will rest like a capital upon the solid shaft of his civic and military renown.

No one who reads aright the history of this institution will ever undertake to question the fact that the life and service of Robert E. Lee is its largest asset, its richest tradition, and its noblest memory.

Washington and Lee's president then graciously acknowledged the presence of the "stout-hearted" Confederates, the sons and grandsons of the wearers of the gray, and of serious-minded students from every section of the nation, gathered "in larger numbers than ever before in the long life of this institution. . . ." Finally he came to his congenial task of introducing Charles Francis

Adams, "the sincere, large-minded son of Massachusetts," to the eager audience. Dr. Denny again rose to heights of eloquence:

I know of no more splendid spectacle in human history, no surer evidence that Virginia is loyal to the national flag, than the spectacle that we behold today. I know of no greater or finer expression of human sympathy, of human courage of heart and of human sincerity of spirit, than the coming of a man, distinguished in the service of his country, and no longer young in years, from the capital of New England, in mid-winter, a thousand miles, to the tomb of Robert E. Lee, in order to strew fresh flowers upon his grave.

After a few more sentences by which the president sought to show the ties between Washington and Lee and Massachusetts, Dr. Denny conferred upon Adams the honorary degree of LL.D., thus making of him "a son of Washington and Lee, and therefore, of Virginia."

Picture the dramatic scene at the Lee Chapel when this distinguished representative of Massachusetts—and in a larger sense, of the victorious North—arose. Standing at the bier of Lee, whom he had come to commemorate, he faced a thousand people, in some of whose breasts yet lingered sentiments perhaps less generous than those of the eminent man before them. The *Rockbridge County News* described the speaker of the day as a vigorous man of less than medium stature, who bore well his seventy years. "His face is of a strong, somewhat reserved New England type, as would be recognized by those familiar with the published portraits of his grand-father, President John Quincy Adams, whom he is said much to resemble." Several sources have commented on the excellence of the delivery of this address, which consumed "considerably" more than an hour. Said the *Lexington Gazette*: "The play of his expressive features conveyed to his audience many delicate shades of thought that cold words were unable to do. A shrug of the shoulder, a frown or smile, the twinkle of the eye, were all used with consummate tact and with telling force, all the more so because unconsciously done." His quiet, unassuming manner made a deep impression.

Charles Francis Adams was fully aware of the uniqueness of his presence on that January day of 1907 in the overflowing Lee

Chapel. He alluded, after a brief discussion of human character, to his own shifting attitude towards the subject of his address. As a Union officer he had subscribed to the community attitude regarding Lee, and would have learned with pleasure of that chieftain's death in battle. Adams quoted the bitter words of Senator Sumner, uttered during the debate of 1870 on the matter of returning "Arlington" to the Lee family. Senator Sumner did not deign to discuss the "traitor," handing "him over to the avenging pen of history." Although disclaiming the role as a representative wielder of history's pen, or that he spoke officially for the Massachusetts Historical Society, the facts were that Mr. Adams was indeed a Massachusetts man, and president of that rarefied historical society. Here he stood, to render judgment upon the South's hero, observing as he did so, "The situation is thus to a degree dramatic."

Early in the address, Adams discussed a delicate phase of his topic. He declared that "the charge still most commonly made against Lee in that section of the common country to which I belong and with which I sympathize is that, in plain language, he was false to his flag,—educated at the national academy, an officer of the United States Army, he abjured his allegiance and bore arms against the government he had sworn to uphold. In other words he was a military traitor. I state the charge in the tersest language possible; and the facts are as stated," Amidst such listeners as sat before the speaker, one contemporary source noted that "glances of displeasure flitted across the countenances of the General's faithful soldiers." But Mr. Adams immediately relieved the tension by adding that "as the result of much patient study and most mature reflection, . . . under similar conditions I would myself have done exactly what Lee did. In fact, I do not see how I, placed as he was placed, could have done otherwise."

He then discussed the theoretical and practical aspects of secession in 1861, the rights and the wrongs of that much-thrashed out question. In an interesting analysis of the historical position of the believers in the state sovereignty, Adams concluded that, historically considered, legally and technically the South was right. But he traced the operation of a practical "divided sovereignty" during the

early decades of the nation's existence, "the *modus vivendi*," by which the framers of the Constitution had hoped the government might bridge all chasms of dispute. The speaker then sketched the rise of the national spirit and the growth of the New West, which immeasurably strengthened nationalism. From the latter viewpoint, secession in 1861 was unthinkable. But Lee's situation as a Virginian dictated his "Great Decision" of 1861; in deciding for his state, he may have been technically a traitor; but Adams found that he stood before the bar of history in very respectable company indeed, which included William the Silent, John Hampden, Oliver Cromwell, and Washington—"a Virginian of note." Referring to his own revolutionary forbears, he added to the crowd of offenders certain of those from whom he was not ashamed to claim relationship—oathbreakers all!

The remainder of the address, well worth a reading, touched upon Lee's military career and his presidency of Washington College, and closed with a reaffirmation of the nobility of General Lee's character. Professor Commager has aptly said that Henry Adams at the grave of Jefferson posed the profoundest problem in American history; here one may remark that Charles Francis Adams at the bier of Lee signalized the climax of sectional reconciliation.

The spirit of good-fellowship continued throughout the day, heartily entered into by the distinguished guest. At the Camp Frank Paxton luncheon, presided over by Matthew W. Paxton, '78, Adams had a seat of honor. William A. Anderson, Attorney-General of Virginia, eulogized Lee. The memory of that central figure of the day was toasted by the guests; and reciprocating Adams' spirit, the Union army was toasted, responded to by a distinguished visitor, Francis D. Millet of New York. The old hills of Rockbridge must have reverberated with unfamiliar sounds! At five in the afternoon the Mary Custis Lee Chapter, U.D.C., sponsored a reception at the residence of President and Mrs. Denny, while in the evening a dinner was tendered by the faculty of Washington and Lee to "the Lee boys" (former students of the period of General Lee's presidency), the latter a college function. Mortimer N. Wisdom of New Orleans served as toastmaster of the dinner, at which Professor Alexander Lockhart Nelson, who had retired

in 1906 after more than fifty years of teaching at his Alma Mater, represented the Lee faculty. Following much old-style oratory and numerous toasts, the alumni dinner closed at 11:45. Despite the late hour, Mr. Adams, who had attended everything during the long day, appeared in good form at the finale of this memorable occasion.

Meanwhile, the events in Lexington had not escaped the notice of the dynamic President Theodore Roosevelt, then entering the twilight of the "imperial years." Roosevelt, a zestful follower of developments in every phase of American life, and an able historian of his country, rendered tribute to the great Southern chieftain at the time of the centennial celebration. After extolling Lee's character, he wrote: "It was eminently fitting that this great man, this war-torn veteran of a mighty struggle, who, at its close, simply and quietly undertook his duty as a plain, everyday citizen, bent only upon helping his people in the paths of peace and tranquility, should turn his attention toward educational work, toward bringing up in fit fashion the sons of those who had proved their faith by their endeavor in the heroic days." This President of the United States, who had sometimes shown himself ungenerous toward the Confederacy, then suggested that General Lee's life and deeds be commemorated by the establishment "at some great representative educational institution of the South of a permanent memorial that will serve the youth of the coming years. . . ."

At once the proposal of President Roosevelt was hailed by the friends and officials of Washington and Lee as referring to "General Lee's own institution." Dr. Denny in particular was most gratified by Roosevelt's allusion to Lee's work as a college executive. It was clear to Dr. Denny what President Roosevelt had in mind, although he had tactfully refrained from mentioning any school by name, "since the context immediately preceding clearly indicates that this school was on his mind, and especially since it is not only a representative institution (with a larger percentage of its student body drawn from a distance than any other Southern school could boast), but it is also the only appropriate institution for the memorial proposed."

The Washington and Lee president informed Thomas Nelson

Page of the action of the school's trustees to make of the chapel a more distinctly Lee memorial center. It was proposed, as urged by the popular writer, Dr. Hamilton W. Mabie, to concentrate there "the Lee tradition and the Lee sentiment." To complete the chapel in accordance with Lee's plans, and to improve the building, would cost about \$25,000. The matter of modernizing the chapel and preserving it, Dr. Denny placed first. Should the fund exceed \$25,000, he could think of many other needs, "which General Lee earnestly urged should be done to advance the usefulness of the institution which he loved more than any other on the earth, and which he believed would become (as it surely will some day, if not in our lifetime) the great representative Southern University." One project which Dr. Denny mentioned with approval was the endowment of several professorial chairs at Washington and Lee.

At this point, however, President Denny encountered difficulty in applying Roosevelt's suggestion to Washington and Lee. He was much astonished to find that a project was afoot to establish a Lee memorial at the University of Virginia! Dr. Denny was also disturbed to learn that a group of Virginia women, headed by Mrs. Kate Pleasants Minor, proposed to establish a chair of history at Washington and Lee as a memorial to General Lee—a scheme which did not, in the view of Washington and Lee authorities, adequately implement President Roosevelt's comprehensive suggestion. Thomas Nelson Page, who had attended both Washington and Lee and the University of Virginia, and who thus had a "dual allegiance," elicited a rather plain-spoken letter from Dr. Denny. The latter called Page's attention to the Richmond, Norfolk, Staunton, and Lynchburg newspapers which without exception had endorsed a significant memorial to General Lee at "his own school," and which would fulfill his purposes as set forth in his presidential reports.

Dr. Denny denied that Washington and Lee sought to traffic in the great man's name, but asserted the school's priority in regard to Lee over all. Washington and Lee could assert for itself "a proper appreciation of his own great and unembarrassed devotion to it and desire for its success, certainly when General Lee's own

memory is at stake." Dr. Denny understood that the University of Virginia suggestion had been carried to President Roosevelt, and asked whether General Lee, with himself out of the question, would have approved it. Dr. Denny desired first the chapel work completed, before the endowment of a chair of history or any other chair; after that was achieved, he would turn to Lee's educational program. With reference to Page's efforts for the Jefferson Memorial fund, Dr. Denny rejoiced that Page had aided in it; but he concluded that it would be no more absurd for Washington and Lee to attempt to raise a Jefferson fund, than for any other school to undertake a Lee memorial endowment!

Page replied promptly to Dr. Denny expressing agreement so far as completing the chapel was concerned, and also endorsing the broadening of the work at Washington and Lee as a memorial to Lee. But he continued to say that he entirely disagreed with Dr. Denny's views of a proposed Lee memorial at the University of Virginia. Page took the position that there was no reason why Washington and Lee should not raise a Jefferson memorial fund, or funds to the memories of other distinguished Americans. This would be appropriate, he felt, both at Washington and Lee as well as elsewhere. He denied that the University of Virginia had "absolutely exclusive title to his [Jefferson's] work or fame," and added that "no more has another Institution, even Washington & Lee University, an absolute fee in the fame of General Lee."

Then this former student of both institutions dealt a blow to President Denny. He had stated, he wrote, in his preceding letter to Dr. Denny, "the facts relating to the utterance of the President." According to Page, President Roosevelt "had prepared to write a letter specifically about the University of Virginia, and it was at the suggestion of Dr. Alderman, Mr. Wilmer and myself that the suggestion was not confined to the University of Virginia, but was made Catholic enough to embrace other institutions." The concluding sentence carried a punch: "It cannot therefore be said that he had in mind exclusively or even especially Washington & Lee." Page declared himself to be in a delicate position, that he had no allegiance but would work for both institutions, and concluded virtuously: "... for my real allegiance is to the whole country, and

any simple efforts I may be able to make are made with the design of helping towards the education and uplifting of the young men of the South."

Dr. Denny did not long leave Page unanswered. He agreed with Page that the "exclusive title to the fame of great men is vested in no single institution." But with an eye to the years 1865-1870 he stated: "Yet it must be true that the fame of some great men, in view of their own history, belongs more exclusively to some institutions than to others." President Denny accepted Page's version of the background of President Roosevelt's letter, and his original purpose in writing it. But he taxed Page with shifting ground and inconsistency: "Yet the facts, as set forth by you, would certainly warrant the conclusion that his original purpose, in so far as it was in accordance with your original request that the President's letter should specify *one particular institution*, would seem to be lacking in that very catholicity of view which you have strongly urged in your letter. . . ."

Indeed, President Denny insisted that "the overwhelming logic of the situation suggested *this* place as the natural and the inevitable place for a genuine *Lee Memorial*," and he confessed that he could not undertake the raising of a Jefferson Memorial at Washington and Lee! President Denny told Page that he had received letters from all over the nation unanimously interpreting Theodore Roosevelt's remarks as he [Denny] had, but closed on a conciliatory note by pointing out that all agreed in the objective of the chapel renovation, "a sacred call." This of course was not merely a Washington and Lee matter, but one for all Southerners—indeed, for all Americans. He believed that President Roosevelt would warmly approve this project, even if that generally alert executive were "not informed concerning the recent history and growth of General Lee's School."

During the following months the Virginia press reported the progress of the R. E. Lee Memorial movement, the goals of which were the chapel improvement and the chair of American history at Washington and Lee. It was reported in March, 1907, that a drive had been launched in Richmond to obtain \$100,000 for these purposes. Late in March Dr. Denny wrote Page that no elaborate

central organization to direct the movement would be created (this was the day before Americans were blessed with high-powered professional fund-raising organizations!). The Reverend Dr. J. William Jones, a biographer of Lee, and Professor James A. Quarles of the Washington and Lee faculty, were appointed as special agents; and alumni and Confederate organizations were expected to unite in promoting the work. Although Dr. Denny said at the outset that all was going well, the help of influential men should be enlisted: Thomas Nelson Page's wise counsel was much coveted, but Dr. Denny would not press the matter upon the novelist.

By May, 1907, a Lexington source could report that Lee Memorial literature was being disseminated, aided by a favorable press. A Virginia committee had been formed, headed by President Denny, and including in its membership Mrs. Kate Pleasants Minor, Governor Claude A. Swanson, Senators Thomas S. Martin and John W. Daniel, Attorney-General William A. Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bryan of Richmond, Dr. Joseph D. Eggleston, and others.

After the death of Professor Quarles in 1907, the Lee Memorial movement was then headed by former Governor D. Clinch Heyward, '78, of South Carolina. With the announcement of Heyward's appointment, it was stated that a goal of one million dollars was set, to realize which a nation-wide organization was to be created.

On November 19, 1907, a Washington and Lee group, including Dr. Denny, Governor Heyward, and Washington and Lee's treasurer, John Lyle Campbell, en route to New York, stopped in Washington, where the first two were luncheon guests of President Roosevelt. The President, ebullient as usual, discussed many things, including briefly the proposed Lee Memorial. While in Washington Mr. Campbell commented upon the remarkable growth of the school within the past five years under the efficient administration of President Denny, but pointedly observed that money was needed.

Unfortunately the United States experienced in the fall of 1907 what has been known as "the bankers' panic," which rendered the task of the money-raisers more difficult. In June of 1908, the trustees of Washington and Lee placed on record their determi-

nation to press to completion the Lee Centennial Memorial campaign, "when the financial condition of the country will justify . . . further appeal." President Roosevelt renewed his public appeal in a letter of January 19, 1909, this time in words which explicitly pointed to Washington and Lee as the institution which he "understood" had been "chosen." Mr. Roosevelt, preparing at the time to retire from the White House and to plunge into the Dark Continent, urged that a Lee Memorial committee assemble in the near future at Washington or elsewhere. Later in that year, Roosevelt's protege and successor, the genial William Howard Taft, publicly endorsed the Washington and Lee memorial idea. President Taft, who had wound up his 13,000 mile tour of the United States in Richmond on November 10, 1909, assured the South that he wished to show that section that it was in full fellowship in the Union. Mr. Taft spoke of waning passions regarding the Civil War. "We have reached a point, I am glad to say," he told Richmonders, "when the North can admire to the full the heroes of the South, and the South admire to the full the heroes of the North."

This loyal son of Yale referred to his Alma Mater's policy of erecting a memorial to her sons who perished in the Civil War—Southern as well as Northern sons. "And so it is that I venture to hope that the project suggested by my predecessor, President Roosevelt, may be alluded to by me with approval, and the expression of the hope that it is coming to fruition, to wit, that there should be a great memorial in honor of General Robert E. Lee, in the establishment of what he himself would value most highly, a great school of engineering at Washington and Lee University, and I take this opportunity to express my deep sympathy in that movement, and my desire to aid it in every way possible and proper."

The Richmond *News-Leader*, in commenting on President Taft's words, noted that the Lee Memorial Movement, begun several years before, had lagged because of Governor Heyward's ill health, the panic of 1907, and "other disturbances." Mr. Taft had injected new vigor into the movement, it was believed, and had even called for four or five millions with which to establish

at Lexington "a central point and headquarters for scientific and engineering instruction for the whole country."

Despite this development, eventually it appeared to be impossible to fulfill the suggestions of President Taft, certainly not in the direction of engineering, for this movement to set up at Washington and Lee University a memorial to General Lee faded within a few years into oblivion. While the Charles Francis Adams episode and its aftermath failed to yield for Washington and Lee University significant material gains, it would be true to say that its real importance lay in what it symbolized—the end of the road to reunion.

Howard Mumford Jones

THE LETTER WRITERS OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA*

The absence of a printing press and therefore of both pamphlet and news sheet established the manuscript letter as the chief medium of literary communication in seventeenth-century Virginia, a pattern of intellectual intercourse which lasted into the nineteenth century and which helps to explain why a figure like Jefferson turned naturally to letter-writing rather than to book or essay for expression. The piety of descendants has printed innumerable seventeenth-century letters (with varying degrees of textual accuracy) in the historical magazines, though many others remain unpublished. The wanderer in this rich chaos finds a good many scattered passages of effective style, warm human interest, or unconscious humor. Sir Francis Wyatt castigating Captain Nathaniel Butler for his slanders against Virginia produced in 1623 or 1624 a piece of epistolary sarcasm that has the right ring, as when he said: "This agrees with his finding devastations, where he never was, finding wrong judgement, where he never was present at the hearing and determining of causes, perhaps the cause of his malice"; but the modern reader is more likely to be startled by his statement: "To plant a Colony by water drinkers was an inexcusable error in those, who layd the first foundation, and have made it a received custome, which until it be laide down againe, there is small hope of health." Or Alexander Murray, writing in 1665 from Mobjack Bay, expresses with considerable sauvity what may be called the Horatian ideal:

Could a publick good, consist with a hermetik condion, I
should prefeere it before all others, but the nixt to it which is

*Excerpt from *The Literature of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston. 1946. Reprinted by permission of the author.

the settling in a wilderness of milk and honey: non can know the sweetness of it: but he that tasts it: one ocular inspection, one aromatik smel of our woods: one hearing of the consort of our birds in those woods would affect more than a 1000 reported stories let the authors be never so readable.

And the gaiety of nations is increased by Nicholas Spencer's description of his state of health (1672):

My chief grieve is the paine of the Hypochondriacke, with some tymes A swiming in my head and A paine in the hinder part of it, with often moderate paines occasioned as I suppose by wind flyeing into my shoulders, backe and hipps; little Appety, and little sleepe, often A nautiateing of my victualls; very subject to receive coulds and apt to be A little feaverish. My urin is Thin, and pale. In A morning when I first rise I am apt to be troubled with A trembleing in my Limbs. By what I can understand of my distempers it proceeds from obstructions of spleen, Liver and Messeraicke veines.

"I beseech God," he says, to "sanctifie these afflictions unto me." For the sake of brevity, however, three representative figures may be chosen for discussion.

However repugnant the modern liberal may find the later career of Governor Sir William Berkeley, his letters show him to have been a pungent stylist. Writing Sir Henry Bennet in 1665, he invents a phrase like "knowing that no seasonable showers or dews can recover a withered root"; and two years later, in an appeal to Arlington for financial assistance he says (having reference to court favors): "I wanted the helpe of a frendly Angel to put me into the Poole when the waters were made seasonable for hopes and powerful to heale dispayre." Writing to England, he liked to picture himself as an old and broken man:

my Lord age and misfortunes has wilted my desires as wel as hopes and the truth is I cannot in this time of my very old age so wish myselfe happy but that I presently repent of my desires to be so the way I proposed. . . .

Sir,—I am so overwearied with riding into all parts of this Country to stop this violent rebellion that I am not able to support myselfe at this Age six months longer and therefore on my knees I beg his sacred Majesty would send a more vigorous Governor,

but there was nothing feeble about the indomitable ancient who, at the age of seventy-one, informed the Virginia commissioners that "Of this particular of the Postilions he is as innocent as the blessed Angels themselves," and rejoiced evilly over the death of Nathaniel Bacon:

the justice and judgement of God overtooke him. His usual oath was here sworn (at least 1000 times a day was God damme my blood) and Gode soe infested his blood, that it bred lice in incredible numbers, so that for twenty days he never washt his shirts, but burned them. To this God added the bloody flux, and an honest minister wrote this epitaph upon him:

Bacon's dead. I am sorry at my heart

That lice and flux should act the hangman's part.

A savage, intemperate tyrant in his old age, he was an immensely active, loyal, fanatical, well-informed, dogmatical, and disillusioned proconsul. Of his rough, military oratory something has already been said; his pamphlet of 1663, *A Discourse and View of Virginia*, a piece of special pleading which bears the mark of haste but which displays nevertheless a statesmanlike grasp of the colonial problem, contains in a single sardonic sentence the key to his character:

But a nearer way to a publick unquarrelled contribution they cannot find, having this Axiom firmly fixt in them, That never any Community of people had good done to them, but against their wills.

When for his cruelty the king finally recalled him, the old man, evil and incorruptible, might mournfully reflect on what he had written Arlington ten years earlier: "I have donne the King and his blessed father all faithful service in my station, but am as farr from pretending merit to my King as the most pretending strict presbyterian is from [G]od."

In comparison Thomas Ludwell is a colorless figure, but he deserves to live in literature not so much for his smooth, official, expository style as for one or two passages of dramatic description. One of these concerns the Valley of Virginia:

[The explorers] were taken up by a river of (as they guesse) 450 yards wide, very rapid and full of rocks, running soe farr as they could see it due north between the hills, the bankes where

of were in most places, according to their computation, nere one thos'd yards high, and soe broken that they could not coast it to give a more ample acc't of its progresse. The mountains they passed were high and rocky and soe grown w'th wood as gave them great difficulty to passe them, but from the last they were on, w'ch was at that river before menconed, they judged themselves w'thin ten miles of other hills, barren and naked of wood, full of broken white cliffs, beyond w'ch (soe long as they staid) they every morning saw a great fogg arise and hang in the aire till 10 o'clock; from whence we doe conjecture that those foggs arise either from morasse grounds or some great lake or river to w'ch those mountains give bound; and there we doe suppose will be the end of our labour, in some happy discovery w'ch we shall attempt in the end of Somer. . . .

No other passage in the literature of seventeenth-century Virginia has thus quite caught the magic of natural distance.

Equally good is Ludwell's account of the hurricane of 1667:

But on the 27th of August followed the most dreadful hurricane that ever this country groaned under. It lasted 24 hours—began at North East and went round northerly till it came to West, and so on till it came to South East, where it ceased. It was accompanied with a most violent rain but no thunder. The night of it was the most Dismall tyme that ever I knew or heard off, for the wind and rain raised so confused a noise, mixt with the continual cracks of falling houses and the murmer of the waves impetuously beaten against the shores and by that violence forced and, as it were, crowded up into all Creekes, Rivers and Bays to that prodigious height that it hazarded the drowning of many people who lived not in sight of the Rivers, yet were then forced to climb to the top of their houses to keep themselves above water. [It] carryed all the foundations of the fort at Point Comfort into the river, and most of our Timber (which was very chargeably brought thither to perfect it). Had it been finished and a Garrison in it, they had been stormed by such an enemy as no power but God's can restrain, and in all likelihood drowned, so that, had the lightening accompanied it, we should have believed nothing else from such a Confusion but that all the Elements were at strife which of them should doe most towards the reduction of the Creation into a second Chaos. It was wonderful to consider the contrary effects of that storm, for it blew some ships from their Anchors and carried them safe over shelves of sand where a Wherry could [with] difficulty pass, and yet knockt the bottom [out] of a ship be-

longing to Col. Scarbrough (ready to sail for England) in eight foot water more than she drew. But when the morning came, and the sun arisen, it would have comforted us (or any else) after such a night, had it not withall lighted us to ruins of our Plantations, of which I think not one escaped. The nearest computation is at least 10,000 houses blown down, all the Indian Grain laid flat upon the ground, all the Tobacco in the fields torn to pieces and most of that which was in the houses perished with them, the fences about the corn fields either blown down or beaten to the ground by trees which fell upon them; and before the owners could repair them, the hogs and cattle got in, and in most places devoured much of what the Storm had left (and in many places all [was devoured]!), so that we are at once threatened with the sword of the enemy returning upon us, with extreme wants of provision by the Storm, and of cloathes, ammunition and other necessities by the absence of the ships. . . .

This Defoe-like realism, this grasp of what is visible and tangible, this rapid reporting are poles removed from the conscious manner of Strachey.

The history of Virginia which William Fitzhugh intended "for the perswading Inhabitants hither" was never written, and the digest of Virginia laws prepared by him has disappeared. Time has antiquated the learned expositions of legal precedents with which the published letters begin, and his accounts of tobacco shipments are mainly of interest to economists, but the chatty, garrulous plantation owner, type of gentleman farmer who came into being after the middle of the century, lives in his own right. Style gave him no end of trouble. "I must confess," he wrote Hayward in 1686, "I want abilitys to polish & adorn my expressions with that Elegance & sweetness of stile your two letters . . . are full freighted with," yet two years later he was censoring Durand's *Journal* for its formal defects:

I thank your kindness in Mr. Durand's book, and must agree with you as well as I can understand it, that its a most weak unpolite piece, having neither the Rules of History nor method of description & taking it only as a private Gentleman's Journal, 'tis as barren and defective there too; when I come out in print do intend to appear more regular and therefore as yet am not provided for such an undertaking.

A sentence might wander endlessly through his pages, but he was capable of terseness:

The widow says she has paid it, Capt. Brent says he has never received it. She is my neighbour and a widow, the other is my particular friend.

Sometimes he labored an elaborate metaphor:

With the Same Content and a Satisfaction as wearied travellers take up their In, or weather Beaten Voyagers their desired Port After a long tedious and stormy voyage, so did I the most welcome joyfull and glad news of your health, welfare and prosperity. . . .

But sudden picturesqueness is more characteristic, as when he speaks of "good hearty plantable land," "a Skilfull & quaint Surgeon," "a warm wary person." Occasionally he is innocently comical, as in this letter to his brother in 1686:

God Almighty hath been pleased to bless me with a very good wife and five pledges of our conjugall affection, three of which he has been pleased to call into the Arms of his Mercy, and lent me two, a hopefull boy and girle, and one other that will not suffer So close confinement is preparing to come into the world.

He gives us also the homely details of plantation life, as when he scolds John Buckner for selling him a dumb Negress—"you knew her qualities," he says, "which is bad at work worse at talking and [you] took the opportunity of the Softness of my Messenger to quit your hands of her" or protests to a Mrs. Letten, an exasperating woman:

Now Madam having thus clearly laid down the matter to you, I must request you to call reason to the helm before you give your censure and consider where the fault lyes. . . .

He cannot forego a sardonic hit at his own family:

Your letter to my brother Luke he received but the meaning thereof, my sister being dead, he will not be made to understand at present, and is so great a fool that in one years time he will be incapable of serving himself or friends, therefore I advise if he owes you any thing, you take the first opportunity while he has something left to get it out of his hands.

One of the more amusing notes apologizes for being drunk:

I cannot miss this opportunity to beg my Excuse for parting so rudely without taking leave, I am sure some of the Company were equally concerned in the Bacchanalian Banquet and those that were not, cannot deny an Excuse to the great absurdity of Solacisms committed by the Bacchanals who have Priviledge by Bacchus himself the first Institutor of the Order."

One reads Fitzhugh for these stroke of humanity, but he is even more useful as illustrating the growth of neo-classical culture. A contemporary of Dryden, he could turn a moral sentiment as neatly as Dick Steele:

By my sister I understand our poor Mother and dear Sister have not only tasted but drank a large draught of the cup of affliction and waded through abundance of calamity and trouble, which I truly condole, & do think it both our duty not only to commiserate, but as far as our ability extended not to suffer one to want, who gave us our being, nor suffer her to struggle to live who (under God) gave us life here. Charity directs to help those in want and distress, but Nature, Duty, the Laws of God and man not only commands but enjoins us to give the utmost help to a distressed Parent.

"Afflictions," he tells his parent, "mature and ripen the soul for Heaven," but he found utility a more practical guide. "I know," he wrote Richard Lee in 1687/8,

you are too well practiced in the Topicks of Honour and generosity to render advice other than fair and candid & . . . you are not Yorkshire enough to set the course of your advice by the compass of your Interest. Sir I shall always endeavour to manage those parts that God Almighty have given me the use of, that the Devil may not have the application and . . . be sure to keep honesty & integrity at the helm when I launch out into any manner of concerns. . . .

But his most striking rule of conduct, the ideal which, guiding other Virginians (as has been seen), was central in the life of Fitzhugh was the Horatian doctrine of the mean, and he returns again and again to that doctrine, the quiet happiness of avoiding strife:

Praised be God I neither live in proverty nor pomp, but in a very good indifferency & to a full content.

I never met a Disappointment with greater chearfullness,

than when I was informed of your [Hayward's] Purchase of the seat of land contiguous, for my intention of purchase was to have such neighbors on it as might live quietly & honestly, the contrary of which are in all places ill, but here really pernicious.

... contented condition, which in my opinion far exceeds the other [that of wealth], for its the mark that all drive at from the Monarch on the Throne to the lowest Tradesman, without which the riches of Croesus are not satisfactory, and with it the lowest Degree passes his time away here pleasantly.

As your late purchased villa gives you the happy opportunity of retirement, so it gives at the same time the seecret and pleasant enjoyment of yourself and a true Epicurian contentment, that is, a real satisfaction of the mind, which I heartily & sincerely wish you.

Such was this honest Virginian, who, if he wrote that "kind husbands may be sometimes met with, but to meet with a concatenation of an Indulgent Husband, an obliging nature and generous temper in one person is very rare," could also lament that "Our estates here depend altogether upon contingency's" which "exceed my Inclinations in worldly affairs," and in one and the same letter ask for "an ingenious boy out of the hospital" to "cast accounts" and for "an able, learned, serious & sober Minister, whose allowance here would be large & comfortable." When he died, Jamestown was almost a century old. His kindly, rambling correspondence reflects a culture which, if it lack the finer ornaments, is sure of itself and not inclined to great exertions.

Marshall W. Fishwick

CABELL AND GLASGOW:

Tradition in Search of Meaning

The problem of the fairy tale is what a balanced man will do in a fantastic world. The problem of the modern novel is what an unbalanced man will do in a common-place world. Two Virginians, James Branch Cabell and Ellen Glasgow, have spent their creative lives looking for appropriate answers.

Cabell has found it necessary to invent Poictesme, a complicated, anachronistic, and mythical kingdom. Actually it is first cousin to the commonwealth of Virginia; not so much Virginia-as-it-was, but Virginia-as-it-ought-to-have-been. Because he disliked the world he saw outside his Virginia home, James Branch Cabell invented one inside his Virginia mind.

Poictesme is a land of endless loveliness and drollery, where "almost anything is rather more than likely to happen save one one thing only: it is not permissible for anybody to cease, for one moment, remaining a human being." Despite his efforts to free himself from place and time, Cabell satirizes his own aristocratic heritage, and the tastes and habits of Virginia. We read him for delight, and end up realizing that Cabell's charm comes from the fact that he too is a prisoner of his heritage.

"He had an air of legendary remoteness, as if he lived in a perpetual escape from actuality," Ellen Glasgow said of him when she first saw Cabell, the undergraduate at William and Mary in the 1890's. "I admired his aristocratic detachment, the fine thin modeling of his features, and the enigmatic quality of his expression."¹ Born on Richmond's fashionable East Franklin Street in 1879, James Branch was the first of three children. After private schooling, he attended the state's oldest college, where he studied the classics—the traditional pattern for a cultivated person of the old

¹Ellen Glasgow, *The Woman Within* (New York, 1954), p. 133.

stock. Afterwards Cabell worked on the *Richmond Times*, and then the *New York Herald*, finding New York "virtually village-like." Back in Richmond, he undertook genealogical research, traveled in Europe, and tried his hand at the ballades, rondeaux, and sestinas that were then in fashion. As a potential author, he inherited the trappings of chivalric romance so beloved in Virginia. His ambition was to write popular fiction like that of Henry Harland and Anthony Hope, dealing with "beautiful fine girls and really splendid young men, and everything would come out all right in the end."

Another early interest was genealogy, as *Branchiana*, *Branch of Abingdon*, and *The Majors and Their Marriages* demonstrate. His first novel was called *The Eagle's Shadow*. "The typed manuscript went northward in 1904, to be rejected forthwith by the first publishers to whom it was offered," Cabell wrote. Later on when it was accepted, his fictional career was launched.

His early books depict a thinly disguised Virginia. Fairhaven is Williamsburg, Lichfield is Richmond. In them Cabell, the admirer of Wilde and Shaw, is poking fun at his fellow-Southerners—but not in an un-Southern way. Cabell starts out conventionally, "then performs surprising pirouettes and writes a kind of rather Shavian comedy in which the author pulls out rugs and chairs from under the Southern conventions."²

The Cords of Vanity (1909) has as its hero the worldly Robert Etheridge Townsend. He passes a summer at a Southern resort by taking clinical notes of his outdoor affair with an attractive girl. Later on he writes a novel using the material. This he reads to a sympathetic uncle, to find out if decorum will allow him to publish it. The uncle has just read the same story in a popular novel by a woman writer using a masculine name.

The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, finished in the spring of 1911, has a heroine with a deformed pelvis. Women in those days were not allowed to have a deformed pelvis, or any pelvis at all, in print. Colonel Musgrave, the story's principal character, is a

²Edmund Wilson, "The James Branch Cabell Case Reopened," in the *New Yorker*, April 21, 1956, pp. 129 f.

Virginia snob of the old school, comically conceived. In these books we meet, provincial people whose lives are "ardent, sumptuous, and fragrant throughout with the fragrance of love and roses, of rhyme and of youth's lovely fallacies."

The hero in his next novel, *The Cream of the Jest*, decides to get away from bourgeois Virginia by indulging in daydreams. He escapes to a world of fancy which is a mixture of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Age of Reason, all embellished with details from various scrambled folklores. The name of the world is Poictesme, minutely described and filled with all the appropriate trappings. Populated by an Arthurian circle of comrades, it is complicated by many names and genealogical references. *Jurgen* in particular, made Cabell an international figure and a *cause célèbre* in the 1920's. The books liberated him from the literary stereotypes of his region, plunging him into a vibrant and variegated dream world, relieving him of old problems and clichés. In never-never land he found himself.

When *Jurgen* appeared in 1919, it attracted the attention of John S. Sumner, secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. By attacking the book he set off a furor which raged for months and made the book a "must" for the literati. The merry game of finding the "key" to *Jurgen* was played everywhere. Amy Lowell, Booth Tarkington, James Huneker, H. L. Mencken, and Hugh Walpole joined in protesting the suppression. Cabell's publishers issued a documentary volume, called *Jurgen and the Law*, after the ban was lifted on October 19, 1922. Was *Jurgen* an actual character of a bygone age, or only Cabellian invention? In either case, the name "*Jurgen*" became famous and travelled to foreign lands; while critics searched for antecedents, the public was content to read. The Cabell cult flourished.

In explaining how it prospered, Edmund Wilson reminds us that the younger generation of the 1920's was escaping from the genteel censorship that had reigned so long. The iconoclasts were elated to find in Cabell, heir of the eighteenth-century South, a cavalier treatment of taboos. Cabell was not altogether happy with his sudden fame. "I felt I had not earned my celebrity with fairness or through any personal achievement," he explained in *As*

I Remember It. "After eighteen years of unsuccess I had become temporarily famous through accident."

Rather than moving in the direction of popular taste, and repeating the success-formula, Cabell went on to produce books that must have seemed to his editors and publishers perversely unpublishable. He insists on giving us all the detail of wicked gallantries and discomforting infidelities. The tone is tolerantly cynical. We are given a minutely accurate picture of the "good old days" so that we may know that they too were built on sham and illusion. So it is, too, with Cabell's description of his own life. "But for all that," he was quoted as saying in 1949, when his fiftieth book appeared, "my fifty books are merely the results of an attempt to outrun the monotony of existence."

Sensual and unscrupulous Manuel, who begins as a swineherd and ends up as Poictesme's emperor, is the chief protagonist of the later novels. While Jurgen is the man of intelligence, Manuel is the man of action. His legend grows throughout Poictesme after his death, because men believe in his power and wisdom. This is as Manuel wanted it. When asked if he will remodel the earth, he replies: "Who knows? At all events, I do not mean to leave it unaltered."

Though seemingly so far from the earlier Lichfield volumes, those about Poictesme have striking similarities. In both we have the attacks on an outmoded etiquette and perfunctory religion which Cabell (who claimed to be a good Episcopalian, since he went to church every Maundy Thursday) knew. His romances are very different from those of earlier Virginia writers; but he too has a case of the Sir Walter disease. His concern with sex marks his reaction against the deification of upper class ladies. A thick deposit of hopes and fears flowered again in his serene disenchantment. Ellen Glasgow commented on this in *A Certain Measure*. "The austere perfection of his art," she said, "with its allegorical remoteness and strangely hollow ring, could have sprung only from a past that has softened and receded into the eternal outline of legend. Certainly it is an art that belongs by inheritance to the South."

In recent years Cabell has concentrated on essays that reveal his

skill at combining tenderness, truth, and urbanity. *As I Remember It* is a handful of memories of old friends and collaborators. *Quiet, Please* tells how it feels to fall out of literary fashion. *Let Me Lie* deals puckishly with Old Dominion history. He acknowledges from the start that Virginians shape their history with discretion, and refuse to endorse anything unless it is edifying and pleasing. "That our forefathers were in reality a rather commonplace set—and far more that they were a gang of thieving opportunists—would be a creed from which none could derive any profit," he points out. "No history is a matter of record; it is a matter of faith."³

His essay on General Lee shows clearly what sort of Virginian Cabell is. He assures the General that he was "born of your people and of your caste and of your adherents." For Lee's unbending, invincible, and even somewhat stolid integrity, Cabell has the greatest deference. "My blood warms to you, betrayingly," he writes, "and reason, defeated by atavism, quits the field." Lee's saying that his one purpose was to accomplish something for the benefit of mankind and honor of God seems to Cabell a phrase which Valiant-for-Truth would have uttered, if only John Bunyan had been so happily inspired as to think of it. Should Lee's career reveal any mistakes or shortcomings, Cabell promises to stand with that considerable band of Virginians who would revere them also.

Less lavish, though equally sincere, is the tribute paid his longtime neighbor, to whom *Let Me Lie* was dedicated: Ellen Glasgow. She wrote the *Tragedy of Everywoman*, as it was lately enacted in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Her novels were very different from his; she, even more than Cabell, was a prisoner of her inheritance.

Born in one of Richmond's grey stone ivy-covered manors, in 1874, Ellen Glasgow was given every advantage that upper class society afforded. The primer from which she learned her alphabet was a volume of Sir Walter Scott. At sixteen she made her formal debut at the St. Cecelia Ball in Charleston, after which she was formally presented to Richmond. Summers meant trips to fashion-

³James Branch Cabell, *Let Me Lie* (New York, 1947), p. 74.

able White Springs. At eighteen she heard the opera in New York, along with a Southern lady who "chaperoned her severely." Virginia seemed to her a hall hung with rare and wonderful tapestries, a cathedral illumined by blue and wine-colored stained glass windows. She could be thankful for where and what she was. She was a Virginia lady.

Yet, while still in her twenties, Ellen Glasgow decided what she must oppose throughout her career: the false, the affected, the sentimental, and the pretentious in Southern life and fiction. All around her, truth and illusion were intricately mixed. She would devote her life to separating the two and infusing into sweet and insipid Virginia literature a measure of blood and irony.

The device she chose to accomplish this was a multi-volume social history of Virginia, written in the more freely interpretative form of fiction. The series is divided into three parts: six novels of the Commonwealth, three novels of the country, and four novels of the country. While American fiction entertained itself with historical pageantry, she set about to write a history of manners that would embrace all aspects of the life around her. She began the work in 1899, and finished it only a few years before her death in 1945. "In looking back over the years," Miss Glasgow wrote in 1938, "I have often wondered whether any other obstinate author could ever have received so little understanding encouragement. Of encouragement that was misunderstanding, I had, I think, a little more than my share."⁴

The Battleground, first novel of the series, attempted to portray the last stand in Virginia of the aristocratic tradition. It covered the period from 1850 to 1865, and in method and theme laid out the pattern the later books would follow. Not the fortunes of war, nor the moral order of the universe, but economic necessity doomed the South to defeat, we are told. In the industrial age that inevitably followed, the aristocratic tradition could survive only as an outmoded memorial. Forsaken by time, it was condemned to stand alone and unnourished.

Before writing this book, Miss Glasgow visited every scene of

⁴Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Measure* (New York, 1938), p. 11.

her narrative, and studied several angles of vision. She kept complete files of the Richmond *Enquirer*, the Richmond *Examiner*, and the New York *Herald* for the years she was covering. In the dozen books that followed, she continued to draw communities, houses, and scenery directly from life. Richmond has changed to Queensborough, Williamsburg to Kingsborough, and Petersburg to Dinwiddie. She did not want to write about a town until she "knew every buttercup in spring on the courthouse green." Her research was meticulous, her style was brilliant and epigrammatic. Her books showed a whole century of well-mannered futility on one level, and incurious resignation on another.

The Voice of the People, which covers the Reconstruction epoch, takes us to Williamsburg, Virginia to Petersburg, and *The Deliverance* to Southside Virginia. *Barren Ground* depicts the Piedmont, and *Vein of Iron* the southern portion of the Shenandoah Valley. Seven novels take place in and around Richmond—*The Romance of a Plain Man*, *Life and Gabriella*, *The Builders*, *One Man in His Time*, *the Romantic Comedians*, *The Sheltered Life*, and *In This Our Life*. The background of *They Stooped to Folly* is a composite of several Virginia cities, including Norfolk and Danville. *The Miller of Old Church* deals with the back country.

Miss Glasgow knew intimately the Virginia of which she wrote. Though reared in Richmond, she spent long periods either in her father's place in Louisa county or at the Glasgow homestead in Rockbridge county. Trips through Tidewater were frequent, as were journeys down the Valley. She cultivated a feeling for the land. It became a part of her as a person and artist. "If I were to walk out into the country and pick a scene for a book," she wrote in the preface to *The Sheltered Life*, "it would remain as flat and lifeless as cardboard. But the places I loved or hated between the ages of three and thirteen composed an inexhaustible landscape of memory."

Across this vivid landscape pass people, as thick and fast as dead leaves, whirling and dancing, and then disappearing from view. Many of them linger on, in memory. There are half-pathetic aristocrats, like Judge Honeywell, General Archbald, and Mrs.

Lightfoot; old Cyrus Treadwell and his Negro mistress; Virginia Pendleton, the product of a tradition and education founded upon the theory that the less a girl knew about life, the better prepared she was to contend with it; Grandmother Fincastle, recreating her life in hopeless reverie. There are powerfully-drawn Negroes, totally unlike the Southern stereotypes, human, tender, trapped: Big Abel in *The Battleground*, Aunt Mehitable Green in *Barren Ground*, Memoria in *The Sheltered Life*, Parry Clay in *In This Our Life*. Always the primary concern is to interpret human motives and relationships. A past mistress of the art of parenthetical malice, her prose frequently reminds us of Jane Austen, or (because of her ironic view of man and nature) Thomas Hardy.

Not only Virginia's people, but also the social order, come under constant scrutiny. The major theme is the rise of the middle class as the dominant force in the state. The *Romance of a Plain Man* deals with the poor whites from the rural districts, while *The Voice of the People* follows the upward way of the city working man. Both the outward and inward processes are examined, without sentimentality or superficial picturesqueness. Her single motive in these social studies, Ellen Glasgow has told us, is to analyze "the enduring fibre of human nature under the law of continuity and the sudden impetus of dramatic occurrences." She wants to show the South as it really is. But this, in her opinion, does not mean filling her books "with multitudes of half-wits, and whole idiots, and nymphomaniacs, and paranoiacs, and rakehells in general, that populate the modern literary South." As far from Erskine Caldwell as she is from Thomas Nelson Page, she is in search of truth, not sensation.

Ellen Glasgow can best be understood as a regional novelist. At the same time, her regionalism possesses the universal attitude of mind of an artist, and is never merely "local color." Her people are human beings, wrestling with universal problems in a particular locale and time; theirs is a creative, and not a photographic, reality. The atmosphere and spirit of the state she knew so well are evoked, but always to serve her purposes as an artist striving for the inner meanings. She supplements observation with understand-

ing and compassion, and to that extent is of far more than regional interest.

Still, the travails of her character are Virginia's struggles, and the philosophy that underlies Miss Glasgow's works belongs more to Virginia than to America.

The two major themes of her whole series are the effort to survive in and renew an exhausted land, and the effort to preserve the integrity and individuality of rural life in an urban surrounding. The land of which Miss Glasgow writes is worn out and eroded; the families on it have struggled for generations to overcome poverty and isolation, and to create a good life. Her land is Virginia, not as romantic novelists would like it to be, but as it actually is. In her use of realism, in which she was the pioneer not only for Virginia literature but for the whole South, Ellen Glasgow was in the vanguard of an important movement for American literature. In the dissection and examining of a decaying aristocracy, she was the leading writer of her times, with only Edith Wharton as a possible rival. As Henry S. Canby has acknowledged:

Edith Wharton and another insider, Ellen Glasgow, began the attack upon the idols of the social temples, North and South. . . . Their stories are evidently preliminary to the obsession with the values of American experience so characteristic of . . . our later fiction.⁵

Throughout her literary career Miss Glasgow was sensitively responsive to both national and international events and trends. Her realism became grimmer in the postwar period, and her concern with social movements keener. She was very much concerned with the fate of the League of Nations, and a prostrated Europe. In that she took as her acknowledged masters of fiction Balzac, Flaubert, De Maupassant, and Thackeray, she was closer to European thought patterns than many American novelists whose subject matter and range were, on the surface, much wider than that of Miss Glasgow.

The universal qualities and problems of Virginia find their best expression in her series of novels. The philosophy which

⁵Henry S. Canby, "Fiction Sums up a Century," *Literary History of the United States* (New York, 1948), II, 1210.

emerges from her studies is a stoic one; it calls for the spirit of fortitude which triumphs over the sense of futility. Her world is one in which dreams seldom come true, and in which good intentions are not enough to bring happiness. Yet it is not a dark world which evil dominates. In a discussion of her views on life, Ellen Glasgow wrote:

"I believe that there are many evils, but that the only sin is inhumanity; and I believe, too, that benign laughter is the best tonic for life. If life is sad, it is also a laughing matter, and it has its moments of rapture."⁶

Failure is the consistent lot of many of her Virginians, especially her women. She finds much to criticize in the social structure of her state. The lives of many of the women in it are founded on lies and illusions. One after another, her heroines come to say in slightly different ways, "There ought to be something more real and permanent than physical love to live by." The half-legendary gentlewomen of the Victorian era, portrayed so skillfully, inevitably encounter stark tragedy. The way that leads to this tragedy is one of waiting—waiting for the first words of love, waiting for the birth of their children, waiting beside the beds of the sick and the dying. Finally, when her posthumous autobiography appeared in 1954, readers found that Ellen Glasgow had been waiting, too.

The Woman Within serves as a sobering coda to her life's work. It demonstrates the slow vengeance life reserves for those who refuse to surrender their innermost sanctuaries, and documents a lonely and agonizing life among what Miss Glasgow calls "the mountains of grief and despair." She did not share the invulnerability and fortitude of her own fictional heroines. She was never far ahead of her own relentless furies, of "a morbid sensitiveness which has stalked me, in a panic terror, for the greater part of my life."⁷ Instead of being unconquerable, her proud isolation turned out to be intolerable. Wounded and caged, she was called upon "to endure the unendurable." Self-pity set in. Her

⁶Ellen Glasgow, "Personal Philosophy," in *I Believe*, edited by Clifton Fadiman (New York, 1939), p. 109.

⁷Ellen Glasgow, *The Woman Within* (New York, 1954), p. 152.

nerves became "harp-strings, played upon day and night by stumbling fingers."

Not by her fear-haunted autobiography, but by her strong-hearted novels, will she be judged and remembered. At mid-century it seemed clear that her life was the best available case study of the twentieth-century Virginia mind in transition. Her life-long social histories, done in fictional form, catch the changes in ethos and ideology as do no other documents. She grew up in an age and environment in which the aristocratic traditions were still a pervasive influence, if not an actuality. The rising lower and middle classes, and the slow but steady progress of democracy, she observed and interpreted on the pages of her novels. She did not try to conceal the shift of power from the old planter class to the new industrialists; but she was not always pleased with the changes the new leaders wrought in the towns they came to dominate:

Like other Southern cities, large and small, Dinwiddie has sold its charm to industrialism, and has grown modern and commonplace. Industry, as usual has proved to be a poor creditor!⁸

Yet the things she liked best about the Virginians whom she studied and described all her life were so deeply imbued in them that industrialism did not change them—such things as fortitude, integrity, and a spirit that somehow carried on beyond defeat. Underneath the troubled and deteriorating surface she found a vein of iron, and on this she rested her philosophy and faith.

Because she chose to write in a new vein, Ellen Glasgow did not receive much ostensible support from the social class in which she grew up. "I had known in my younger years only two persons with whom I had ever discussed books or intellectual ideas," she wrote in 1938. Yet she was admired by such Virginians as Douglas S. Freeman, Virginius Dabney, James Branch Cabell, James S. Wilson, Emily Clark, and Julian Meade. In that she injected a new note of realism and irony into Virginia literature, she cleared the way for a new generation of writers, bringing them closer to universal literary trends and ideas. The University of Richmond

⁸Ellen Glasgow, *Virginia* (New York), preface, p. ix.

gave her an honorary degree, and the College of William and Mary membership in Phi Beta Kappa, showing that academic circles were not unaware of her contribution. But her real influence on Virginia thinking and fiction, almost certainly, will not be felt until Virginia writers come to maturity, free finally to write about the past, the Lost Cause, the Negro, religion, and even sex from any conceivable point of view.

Though they grew up in the same city, James Branch Cabell and Ellen Glasgow seem at first glance to be worlds apart. But only at first glance. They are fighting the same battle, and frequently finding, in irony, the identical weapon with which to attack their smug, provincial Richmond. Both interpret with candor and courage the life around them, and in the final analysis, both are writing from the moral point of view. As Cabell has pointed out, "Ellen Glasgow and I are contemporaneous products of as near the same environment as was ever accorded to any pair of novelists. From it she has builded her Queensborough, and I my Litchfield."⁹ In another essay Cabell adjudged his neighbor "an over-logical woman"; this may give her a less permanent place in American literature than that accorded Cabell. Neither her stoical realism nor his exotic naturalism has seemed to literary critics to point towards a new school of writers. In trying to move out of the pseudo-Eden of earlier Virginia literature, they apparently moved off down blind alleys. Yet even if they did not open new highways, they were not afraid to move forward. And that, in their society and time, was no small achievement.

⁹James Branch Cabell, *Some of Us* (New York, 1930), p. 57.

R. E. Smith, III

A CHILDREN'S STORY

In the hall, standing in the drone of hospital sounds, a monotonous call bell, the steady shuffle of feet, the rising falling murmur of hushed clinical voices, the head nurse had told her about it.

"Terrible," she had said, standing stiff, prim, sterile in the clean white uniform. "A terrible thing." And she had answered, "Yes. No doubt. But an accident."

"But still," the head nurse said. "Well, anyway, that's not our business. Can you take care of it, Miss Mulroy?"

"Certainly," she said. "You let him soak?"

"Yes . . . in the tub. They come off more easily that way."

And she had said, "Yes, of course," and now, standing in the room, she watched the sunlight coming through the open window and across the foot of the bed. Behind her the hospital sounds were dim and she could hear the roar of traffic coming up from the street, the whine of streetcars grinding by below.

She watched the sunlight coming through the window, making a light patch on the tile floor, leaving in the shadows a bathtub that someone had already filled with water, cutting across the foot of the bed where the boy lay, his body a motionless hump in the smell of rot. He lay beneath an arched frame that kept even the sheet stretched over it from pressing against his body. And she said, "Well, good morning Tommy. How are you this morning?"

The boy did not move under the frame, but he opened the eye that he could open, the one that was not burned, and looked over at her. He had that compactness that children have before they grow enough for arms and legs to be appendages. But, even at a distance, the one blistered eye and the solid body, covered with dried yellow dressings, gave off a feeling of sickness and decay.

"You look better this morning," she said, going across the room toward him, smiling as she went, the crisp starched uniform crackling with each step.

"You feel a little better, don't you?" she said. And his mouth turned up slightly at the corners in a weak smile.

She pulled back the sheet and folded it carefully on the end of the bed. Then with both careful hands, she lifted the arched wooden frame from over him and swung it onto the floor. She smiled down at him again."

"Well," she said, "it won't be long now. First thing you know, you'll be up and out of here and home again."

He stopped smiling then and tried to move one arm until she said, "No, don't try. I'm going to put you in the tub now. We'll get those dressings off. And then when we get some fresh ones on, we'll have some breakfast."

She smiled down at him from over the bed, looking into his eyes and away from the burned body, seeing the swollen blistered eye and the one grave one. "Now how will that be?" she said. The corners of his mouth turned up again.

And it was while she was lifting him off the bed, her hands underneath him in the only two places his body was not burned, lifting him slowly, as gently as she could, trying not only to lift gently but to act it too, so that more gentleness came into her face than she was able to get into her hands, that he whimpered and said, "Bebby."

"Bebby?" she asked as she lowered him into the tub of warm water. And he said, "Yes, Bebby."

"Oh," she said, "you mean beddy. We'll have you back there soon." He shook his head, watching her while she said, "But you'll have to soak here for a little while so they'll come off without hurting."

And he said, "No . . . Bebby." But she was putting the soap in the water, churning it with one hand so that the suds came up white and popping on the surface. And she said, "The soap will make it even faster. It's just for a little while."

She cupped the water in her hands, and bringing it up over his shoulders, opened her fingers to let it run down over the yellow caked dressings. The smell of Spring came through the open window, and a warm breeze billowed the curtains inward. Below

in the street, she heard the wail of a siren dying slowly, and he looked up at her.

"Fire engine!" he said.

"No," she said, "ambulance." And as she cupped more water in her hands and let it fall over his shoulders, he said, "Ambulance."

The head nurse stopped in the doorway then, and she looked up at her. "Can I see you a minute?" the woman said.

The boy whimpered again as she stood up, not tears but only a sound in the throat, and she murmured something, not words, but only a tender noise, until he stopped and she said, "Now you sit there, Tommy," and she smiled at him.

"I'll be right back," she said. And the boy nodded his head without moving the blistered body, as she turned and went to the door.

"Yes?" she said, looking at the head nurse. "Is something wrong?"

"No," the woman said, "nothing wrong. But when you're through with him, take care of the one next door, will you."

"Of course," and then, "You said it was gasoline?"

"Yes . . . a stove. The two of them."

"And the sister younger or older?"

"Older," she said, "but not much. He talks about it sometimes."

"It's so terrible, though," she said, thinking no word was ever sufficient for anything. "I mean, one child to another like that."

"As you said, it was an accident. They were both playing. And if someone hadn't left the matches. . . ."

"Yes, I know. . . . But he's so badly burned."

"Well," the head nurse said, "I know they're bad burns. If you need help, call me."

"I will," she said. "But it shouldn't take too long to change the dressings. He's pretty good about it."

"I'll get to the other one when I'm finished," she said, and she turned back into the room and the rancid smell of rotting flesh.

As she pulled at the dressings, he began to cry. The skin was coming with them. "It won't be long Tommy," she said. "We have to get them off."

But the dead skin kept coming with the gauze, and beneath,

it was raw and beginning to bleed, so finally she said, "Maybe we could soak them a little longer. Would you like to do that?"

He nodded solemnly as she started to rock him in the tub, his body swinging in the sudsy water while she kept her arms softly underneath him, listening to the sounds from the street again, quiet in the shade away from the sunny window, until he said "Bebby" again.

"Bebby?" she said, still moving him through the water. "You'll be there soon."

"No," he said, "sister Bebby." And she did not stop, only rocked him through the water.

"Oh," she said, "you mean Debby." And as she rocked him back again, he said, "Yes, sister Bebby."

When the water had soaked through the dressings, she began to remove them slowly. Taking each gauze pad separately, there were over twenty of them, she pulled it gradually from one corner until finally she had one side of it free. And then, pulling at the one side, she peeled it back from the raw skin. As she worked on some of the deeper burns, there was a little bleeding, and he began to cry again.

The cries came in convulsions this time, his short arms beating the air, his face red, then straining to purple, until she said, "It's almost over Tommy. There're only two more. Try not to think about it."

And he said, "I'm bad."

"No," she said. "You're not bad. It's not bad to cry. Not when it really hurts."

"No," he said, not sobbing now, the last tears still running down his face, "I'm bad."

"Oh no," she said. "You're not bad. Little boys are never really bad."

As he looked up at her, she could feel the tenderness rising in her throat. "Here," she said, "let me get this last one and then we'll get you back in bed."

The last one, a shoulder burn, was the deepest of them all, and took several minutes to work loose even one corner of the dressing. It was a burn that had penetrated deep into the muscle, and

the gauze was stiff with the watery serum that it secreted. Around the edges, the serum had dried into scales that flaked off at her touch, and the red center of the burn still oozed the pale liquid as she worked the dressing loose.

"It hurts," he said, just as she was saying, "There, it's off. And that's the last one," looking down where under the dressing the flesh was like cut meat.

She lifted him from the tub then and carried him over to the bed where he sat silent, away from the sun coming in the window, while she got a pan of fresh dressings from a sterile cabinet on the table.

She could smell the pungent salve as she picked each dressing from the pan and laid it on one of the open sores. And it was not until she finally reached the shoulder burn and was putting additional salve on the dressing that he said, "You know what?"

And as she laid the dressing carefully on the burn she said, "No, what?"

"You know what I did?" he said, his voice rising a little as he talked, the street seeming suddenly quiet, the room still.

"No," she said. Thinking, I must not show it. It must be like everything else. "No," she said, "What did you do?"

He looked at her solemnly, the one eye blistered shut, the other watching her.

"I burned Bebby to death," he said.

And looking down into the one grave eye that looked searchingly back at her, she said, "Yes." Well. That wasn't very good, was it."

Roland F. Lee

THE TRAGIC VISION

It was Mr. Auden or Mr. Eliot, or somebody like that, who in recent years spoke of the Tragic Vision and hinted darkly that this vision was not looked at enough, especially in America. Too much superficial optimism, too little squaring away before the grim realities, too little white whale in the makeup—this is the plight of him who lacks the Tragic Vision. And a bad thing too, say the critics. Of course, after reading some of the people who *have* had the vision, one wonders if it is really worth it after all, but that perhaps is beside the point. What I would suggest here is that this vision is not the exclusive property of poets and critics only, but is seen by more people than is commonly supposed.

I believe this point could be proved by reference to my Uncle Mark, a tall, aquiline man who used to come and visit with us at odd intervals. Unless I am badly mistaken, he had the vision. Certainly no one could deny that he was a man of reflection, interested in ideas and keen in observation. He had a quiet, saturnine charm, and, while he could be very funny, managed somehow to give an impression of well controlled melancholy. This it is which makes me think he possessed what the critics call the Tragic Vision. When he made his stately descent to breakfast in the morning, his bold, quizzical gray eyes announced plainly to an observer that he saw through the surfaces of this world. And when he regarded his food, one was sure of it.

The only other mortal who ever looked to me more like a trustee of Tragic Vision was Talbot, our cat. Talbot, even when a comparatively young cat, had the weariness of ages in his eye. He was one set apart. And he possessed that uncanny calmness which characterizes the profound view, the silent waters brooding over the deep. I have tested him in this respect. Upon one occasion when Talbot and George, our dog, were dozing in the backyard, I decided to try their mettle by creeping up on them, finally emit-

ting a series of ferocious barks. George, who was of more shallow character, startled up, barking frantically at the imagined enemy. I could almost make out his, "Jesus! He's right on top of me!" But not so Talbot. Coolly he raised one eyelid, twitched a whisker and then went back to sleep. Your real tragic viewers have always that serenity about them. They don't moan and agonize.

But Uncle Mark ran Talbot a race for his money. Indeed, a deep and appreciative reading of Shakespeare almost gave him the edge—Uncle Mark, I mean. Something of the bard's spirit had rubbed off to give him a philosophic temperament, helped out by the stresses of life.

I remember one blustery December evening when I was downtown with Uncle Jim, another revered uncle. It was nearing dusk, and on a street corner stood a small group of Salvation Army workers in their blue uniforms, bravely playing and singing against the wind while the sullen world trudged by. Their teeth flashed in the lamplight and the steam of their breath rose into the invisible sky. I vividly recall one trumpet player whose eye rolled over at me as we approached. I had the uneasy feeling that I was being singled coldly out for divine attention. Not yet had I learned to appreciate that remarkable organization.

At the moment a dark figure with snowflakes clinging to it appeared before us and led us into a doorway. It was Uncle Mark, who spoke never a word at first, but eyed us evenly.

"There is," he said, "a hostelry nearby which is famed for the stewing of eels. I suggest that we repair thereto, as is my wont about this hour." Something of the bard's language had also rubbed off on Uncle Mark. I never heard him say anything sloppily.

We were about to seek out this hostelry when unfortunately the bank broke into "Brighten the Corner Where You Are," a song that always brought out the worst in Uncle Jim. He could never abide the least formality in religion. "Listen to them," he snorted. "They talk about it. They preach about it. They sing about it. They do every damned thing but practice it. But, damn it, the Kingdom of God is within you!"

Uncle Mark, not being disposed to argue this point, led the way through what he called the "mammon-worshipping hordes"

to the hostelry. It turned out to be a restaurant and bar owned by a Greek who had never stewed an eel in his life. Uncle Mark said he liked the place partly because the maps on the tablecloths were always of cultural interest; one afternoon, he said, he had spent a most instructive hour studying the map of Spain done appropriately in onion soup.

As we sat down, we noticed at the next table a stout greasy man who was busy eating spaghetti from an enormous bowl before him, washing it all down with a swig of beer from time to time. Somehow Uncle Mark seemed to be fascinated by this feeder.

Uncle Jim, still smarting from the memory of the singing, went on in his previous vein, but Uncle Mark remained silent, his somber gaze being fastened on the stout man gulping down great quantities of spaghetti.

"Why, damn it," said Uncle Jim, "it's not going through a lot of silly motions. It's within you. The Kingdom of God is within you."

Uncle Mark appeared to weigh this pronouncement carefully. He frowned, and I could see the pros and cons being measured in the balance. Then he pointed at the stout man. "Is it in that guy?" he asked.

Uncle Jim swung around and looked at the man thoughtfully. "Well," he conceded, "maybe not him. He's too full of spaghetti to have any room for grace."

"He has a more ample girth than most of us," said Uncle Mark. "We must take that into account." He thought for a moment. "When I look at a hungry hound like that, I know why Julius Caesar wanted fat men around him; they wear vacuous expressions. Remember what Caesar says of Cassius? 'Yon Cassius hath a lean and hungry look. Such men are dangerous. They think too much.'"

"Thou hast a rather lean and hungry look thyself," retorted Uncle Jim.

"Yes," Uncle Mark went on, "that man is obviously a hound. Mark how he ladles the swill. He eats and drinks and sleeps. His mind he subverts to the evil purpose of garnering dollars. He hath no poetry in his soul."

"I got no what?" The stout man was glaring at Uncle Mark. He had a broken nose which, added to his small eyes, gave him a pugnacious appearance.

Uncle Mark continued to gaze at him as though considering some specimen that had just been washed up. "I said you had no poetry in your soul. I was in error. You have no soul."

For a moment I thought there was going to be trouble, some "gentle debate" as Uncle Mark would have called it in medieval fashion. But the stout man decided to let well enough alone. Something in the way Uncle Mark looked at him convinced him. Also, I think he was confused by being told he had no soul. The question, perhaps, had never occurred to him.

As for the point of the matter, I don't think even Mr. Eliot could have hit it more precisely. There, in the person of Man Eating, sat one aspect of the Tragic Vision—man's struggle to shuffle off his brutish husk. The tension, the ambiguity—one might almost say the irony—it was all there. But, as Uncle Mark saw, the trouble was that the man seemed in no hurry to get rid of his coarser integument and let his immortal spirit shine through. He was entangled in spaghetti and drowned in beer.

For those who might worry about the effect conversations of this sort would have upon a boy of twelve, I might observe that my uncles were not irreligious men. They just had a strong, independent streak of free-thinking in them. Uncle Mark, for instance, was on good terms with our pastor and even went to church. He said he didn't think the people in church were right, but that there was a faint, just a faint outside chance they might be right. Therefore, as he put it in one of his happy phrases, he paid his dues and kept in with the union.

I don't believe he ever told that to the pastor, probably out of a nice regard for the good man's feelings, but he did ask questions now and then which ruffled the clerical dignity. In particular, he objected to the way the collection was taken up and to what was written on the collection envelopes. One Sunday after church he informed the pastor that the proper method of taking the collection was simply to pass the basket in front of the parishioner, not to wave it temptingly under his nose for seven seconds. Uncle

Mark was very exact about the time involved; he had probably checked it against his watch. Any obvious hesitation, he said, was undesirable.

"A disinterested third party," he told the pastor, "would have thought I was a large-mouthed bass being lured by a Silver Spinner. This loitering of the basket before the devout is not seemly. It disrupts one's meditation."

The pastor didn't seem to appreciate the beautiful simile, but he was a fair-minded man and acknowledged that there might be room for improvement. His first point won, Uncle Mark then took up the matter of the inscription on the envelopes. It read, "Give and it shall be given unto you." This inscription, he explained, implied a deep-seated distrust of the congregation's generosity: to give for the sake of reward was not a generous motivation. It smacked of materialism. He went on to suggest something more fitting, like "Virtue is its own reward." This suggestion really upset the pastor. After he had calmed down a bit, he told Uncle Mark that while spiritual motivation was a fine thing for the spiritual, he didn't think it would work in this case. In fact, from all he—the pastor—had been able to observe, the trouble lay in the fact that his congregation *was* materialistic and that was the only way he could get money out of them. Uncle Mark, of course, recognized the justice of this argument immediately and admitted that the pastor had him there. Upon reflection, it almost seems to me as though in this case it was the pastor who had the Tragic Vision.

If Uncle Mark's observations would have delighted a modern critic, they simply confused people who didn't have the vision. These people went away worried and, I suspect, a little afraid. In particular, our insurance man, Mr. Bates, was baffled by Uncle Mark. A very unimaginative man, who could never see anything more in a fact than the fact itself—and sometimes not even that—Mr. Bates came one day to our house to find Uncle Mark, chin in hand, sitting in the living room. After being introduced, Mr. Bates busied himself with his books, glancing covertly at my uncle's Romanesque profile. Meanwhile, my baby brother Tom entered the room, stared briefly at Uncle Mark, and for some unaccountable reason ran shrieking from the room.

Uncle Mark turned his gaze on the insurance man. "You see," he intoned. "One glimpse of my famine-breeding face and he flies."

Mr. Bates, who had never seen a famine-breeding face before, now stared in alarm. Nor was he reassured by Uncle Mark's next words.

"Doubtless you have reconciled your soul to this job of gathering dollars?" Uncle mark, of course, meant no harm by this question. He simply wanted to know what kind of terms Mr. Bates had made with sordid commercialism. But Mr. Bates' reply was, as might have been expected, quite off the point.

"Our company is one of the oldest in the business," he said stiffly.

"More experienced in knavery than its younger competitors?" asked Uncle Mark, shifting gears easily.

But Mr. Bates got his money without answering and in his turn fled the face that spread famine. Ever after he would watch Uncle Mark warily if the latter happened to be there when he called. I think he felt out of his depth.

Either Uncle Mark decided to give Mr. Bates an intensive course in tragic viewing or else marked him as fair game. I don't know which, but from that time on he would make disturbing observations to him at every encounter. In fact, I believe that after the last one Mr. Bates must have requested a transfer, because we never saw him again.

The last encounter would have made even Elsie Dinsmore see the T. V. The trouble really started with Talbot, our cat. Normally, as I have said, Talbot was a model of critical propriety, ate well, slept much, saw things in their proper black perspective, and looked ambiguous as all hell. But there came a change for the worse. He began to act in a riotous manner and gave every sign of enjoying it. Not content with galloping around the house, he took to leaping on the backs of passers-by as though he were a larger kind of cat capable of pulling them down. Then he would retire to a corner, his tail twitching and a nasty catlike grin on his face. Everyone was distressed. I privately thought, from some hints Talbot had let drop, that he suffered under the delusion that he was a Bengal tiger—a delayed compensation for a youthful re-

pression. Possibly I was wrong. It may have been nothing more than a simple case of Metaphysical Evil embodied in Talbot.

Talbot did bother Grandfather though by a special trick he developed of creeping in between the blankets on Grandfather's bed without disarranging them, after which he would appear as nothing more than a small breathing rise in the middle of the bed. So invisible was he that Grandfather never knew he was there until actually in bed. Then, of course, he would feel him. Most irritating of all, from Grandfather's point of view, was the problem of finding which layer Talbot was in, for the latter cunningly varied it each time. Sometimes he was in the middle layer, sometimes even next to the sheet. And he never gave himself away, though Grandfather dared him to do so. It always wound up with Aunt Martha locating the culprit and throwing him out the door.

Aunt Martha, who had never really warmed to Talbot, was alarmed enough to call a veterinarian. However, she let matters drop when the vet, after being told that the cat was galloping madly about the house, roared back, "He is, eh? Then why the hell don't you put a saddle on him?" Aunt Martha swore that never again, when a cat of hers galloped about the house, would she call that veterinarian. What probably bothered the vet, though, was his memory of the time she had called him up at one o'clock in the morning to tell him that Talbot was drooling at the mouth. He had taken the news rather badly.

But to return to the story. Old Jack had come in while Mr. Bates was sitting in the living room, and Old Jack, like most of our household, did not help to reassure Mr. Bates very much.

Jack was about sixty-five at this particular period of his career. Though not a member of the family, he had all the status of one, outranking me as he did in seniority. As the story was told, he had come some sixteen years earlier to "get back on his feet," and, those members proving unworthy of the trust, he had stayed ever since.

Jack weighed about ninety pounds when in fighting trim and consumed one quart of whiskey every day. Some people, I suppose, would have called him an alcoholic. If he ever ate anything, no one saw him do it, and the only expense he put us to was the use of the attic where he had his bed. He scarcely ever spoke except

when the subject of economics came up. Then he would pause on his way up the stairs long enough to declaim in a watery treble, "Damn capitalists! They live off the labor of us working men." I think he had been an old line Socialist, and that one phrase was all he remembered. Uncle Mark once gave it as his opinion that any capitalist who succeeded in living off Jack's labor, present or past, was a man worth knowing; it would have taken a genius to do the trick.

Most of the time, Jack would come in from a day spent no one knew doing what, waver silently through the front room and up the stairs. He might have been a ghost in an old tragedy going conscientiously about his business. Visitors used to wonder who he was, for never a word was exchanged, and we never used to volunteer any information, preferring to see how long it would take them to get up enough nerve to ask. Some of them came for years and never solved the mystery of Old Jack. Aunt Martha always feared they would think he was related to us.

Well, Old Jack had entered while Mr. Bates was sitting there, the latter no doubt wondering who he was. Jack had no more than started his peregrination across the room when Talbot, with a tremendous leap, landed on his back and clung there in a most ferocious pose. Old Jack swore feebly and almost fell over trying to brush the cat off. Then he turned on Mr. Bates.

"Call your damned dog off!" he cried, apparently under the impression that Talbot and Mr. Bates were minions of the capitalists.

"That isn't my dog," exclaimed Mr. Bates, who realized too late that he was only compounding confusion. "I mean—"

"Whose dog is it then?" squeaked Jack, blinking around in a circle as Talbot released his hold and dropped off.

I have commented before on Talbot's strangely ambiguous character. What Jack saw in him is a case in point. Even to the mixed up Ahab, *Moby-Dick* was at least a whale, but to Jack, Talbot was a dog.

"The beast is his own unfathomable master," said Uncle Mark.

Jack turned one last suspicious glance upon Mr. Bates and, watching warily for Talbot, tottered up the stairs, muttering to

himself about people who lived off his labor. Talbot suffered him to go without hindrance, settling himself in a corner and fixing his large, intelligent eyes upon Mr. Bates in one unblinking stare.

Mr. Bates seemed to feel that a comment was called for. "I hate cats," he announced.

Uncle Mark reflected. "So far as my own particular abominations go," said he slowly, "I hate a number of thing—mostly people. Now Talbot of late seems to harbor animosity toward everyone."

"Talbot? You mean that man?" asked Mr. Bates.

"No. No, Talbot is the cat."

Mr. Bates breathed uneasily. He apparently thought there was something strange in having a cat named Talbot.

Uncle Mark continued to smoke. Then he decided to explain the deeper elements of the drama to Mr. Bates. "You may have noticed that there is a nearness of man to the brute, just as sometimes the brute seems about to burst into a man."

"You mean we're descended from apes?" asked Mr. Bates.

"No ape in possession of his faculties would acknowledge us," replied Uncle Mark. "The chief sign of our species is our capacity for mischief. Now whatever demon has gotten into Talbot is limited by Talbot's brute structure. But that same demon in a man would have vast fields opened to him."

Mr. Bates did not answer. I could see that abstract thought was not easy for him, and that Uncle Mark's use of the word *demon* in a metaphorical sense probably had him thinking that Uncle Mark believed literally in demons. Furthermore, it was evident that Mr. Bates feared if he stayed in this house much longer, he would be believing in them too. I think the critics have a term for this kind of situation, the breakdown of communication, or something like that.

"Next week I go to Sandusky," said Mr. Bates, changing the subject abruptly.

"Sandusky, eh?" Uncle Mark frowned for a full minute at a painting of the Prodigal Son returning to his father. Uncle Mark always said that the fatted calf looked more like a dyspeptic goat.

Then he broke the silence with a question addressed to anyone who could answer it.

"*Why* is Sandusky?"

"I beg pardon?" said Mr. Bates, probably thinking there was something wrong with his ears.

"I said, *why* is Sandusky?"

There was really considerable point to this question, for quite a few people felt that Sandusky was a town with no pretext of a reason for existing. But, luckily for Mr. Bates, who was looking pretty glazed by this time, Aunt Martha came in with his money. He left and we never saw him again.

Now there is certainly a lesson in these events for all of us who are concerned about seeing the Tragic Vision properly. The vision crops up in localities where you would never think of looking for it. Not merely did these events happen in America, but in the heart of the Middle West, of all places.

Sometimes, when I think of Uncle Mark, now some years departed from this arena of hungry hounds, a curious fancy suggests itself to me, an admittedly fantastic kind of picture, but one with some truth in it. I seem to see him at the Gates of Heaven, answering questions for admission. The questioner is, of course, a critic— a tragic critic. And the dialogue runs something like this:

Critic: What is your occupation?

Uncle Mark: Viewing. Tragic viewing.

Critic: Ah! An excellent pursuit. Not enough of us, you know.

Uncle Mark: I know.

Critic: You see things darkly, do you?

Uncle Mark: A nocturnal hue clings perpetually to them.

Critic: Have you any hope for mankind?

Uncle Mark: I have never had any hope for mankind, I do not now have any hope for mankind, and I never will have any hope for mankind.

Critic: Good. Very Good. You consider mankind then irretrievably lost?

Uncle Mark: Every last son-of-a-bitch.

Critic: Emphatic. Quite emphatic. Now, what do you consider the most tragic element in life?

Uncle Mark: Being born.

Critic: Excellent! You have very little to learn, I see. Now, you lived, I believe, in Cleveland. Have you ever been in Sandusky?

Uncle Mark: Sandusky? (a long pause) *Why* is Sandusky?

Critic: I beg your pardon? What do you mean, *why* is Sandusky?

And there we have it. My depest suspicion is that the critic himself would be just as confused by the question as Mr. Bates was. One could set him straight by telling him that it is only the ontological question in a more concrete and spontaneous form, but the point, of course, is that he shouldn't need telling. No, I am afraid that your real tragic viewer like Uncle Mark would leave the modern critic badly shaken. I suppose that Men Thinking always have the advantage over Thinkers. And as for what the critic might make of the inscrutable Talbot, that does not even bear thinking upon. The critic might even wind up with the notion that Talbot was really a cat.

James K. Shillington

THESE SPRING ANATOMIES

Theme and Successions

Theme

"How can the spring return each year
With glass blue skies and farflung scarf of knotted clouds across
the north
With sulfur sun and all the earth hurried with wild bringing forth
And wintered trees throw flowers in the air?
And can the heart have no return?
No Apriltide of cycled time which brings again the milder skies—
Why lies the circle half defined from life's first flood to clotting
ice?
I envy the blood red tulips now reborn!"

I

Night Song

Waking . . . sleeping . . . the lunatic eye of the night
Once more watches the soul's lean and alien senses
Stream out under Taurus and time until the bright climb
Of life recommences. . . .
Cheops of Gizeh, smiling beside your river,
Spring burst calmly tonight from the pale palm's frondage.
When you built your pyramid to deliver
Age out of bondage,
Did you ever think of spring with the gold and granite
On your chest and dust of a young queen prying
Through your robes? Do you advise a return to this planet?
Or just to die, dying?

"... Morning has never re-fired the papyrus's branches.
Hieroglyphs can not abide the stone's forsaking.
We, on whom infinity avalanches,
Lie neither sleeping ... nor yet awaking..."

II

The Skater's Waltz

To go back is to go on again
To turn forward is to turn around
To look up is to look down

I once thought I should never mind the plain
Moving neither in the sun nor in the rain.

No strain of hills, no sudden hell's release ...
I am not stained with poverty. I have not gold nor wheat.

I have never seen the cruel blood flown
Gently from my opened veins nor yet have I ever known
Complete lack of pain. I would cry out
But speak quite naturally for I know how
The golden mean crushes in on me again ...
How equidistant, Euclid's points are, from the beating heart within.

To look up is to look down.
To turn forward is to turn around.
To go back is ... to go on.

III

Eva

And in this age of magnesium, flame, and fragment,
He [in dimension X] comes down the street,
And [in Y] newly shirted, shined, and fragrant,
Ascends to love me [on this axis Z].
In Time, I am placed in a Perfect Dinner Scene:
Such salmon bisque breathes of the far Shoshonee,
Unlike the herring, neither smoked nor as bony.

Once through a heavy door, I saw the garden,
 Trim walls of stone, small fig trees all in bloom,
 Strawberries ripe and the scented horehound borders,
 Sleeping tigers, pigeons violet and blue . . .
 While moist in the shade, the green serpent whispered at noon . .
 And again when I saw, I cried of my own accord:
 Bless and bear, O pear tree espaliered Lord!
 Yet to this day I am barred from Love by the jewelled tree
 Until Death understands at last and succors me.

IV

Jurassique

Would he like it better there? He did like this.
 He scythed his glowing mouth from fern to fern,
 Tearing the tender heads with delicate choice . . .
 But why chance known bliss for promised bliss?
 He splashed the sucking mud and tried to turn,
 [Ninety feet away his after voice
 Reported to his tail that it might miss
 The ginkoes and the cycads.] He would have to learn
 To sing . . . To shout hosannas! How to rejoice. . . .
 He would really go! It must be the right thing to choose!
 Of course it meant leaving his marshes . . . his ease. . . . He
 considered . . .
 Should he sink himself just once more in the lovely ooze?
 Slow pterodactyls swung through the clouds now gold
 frittered . . .
 Down the red sun sank in the tidal sloughs.
 Somewhere in the dusk a lone acheopteryx twittered . . .
 And far to the north, unblinking, the gay ice glittered.

V

This Fourth Face of Siva

Lovely is the morning when first awakened in slumber,
 Shadowed and fresh, soundless with the sounds of silver,

Lovely is this first life and suddenly the flash of May!
Yet I have never known a yesterday I would remember.

Crystalline honey, violet leaves, old amber,
And blackest silk, the naked spine's pale camber,
Rich wetted silk and trembled phalloid shapes of May.
Yet I have never known a yesterday I would remember.

In rankness grow the weeds—the ripe cucumber
Has rotted upon its vines—thus ends our summer.
All now spent which should have seeded viripotent May.
Yet I have never known a yesterday I would remember.

And here are the ungarlanded trees of early November.
Here are the aloe-ed orchards and waste memories.
Wild is the spillage of May, wild willing May. . . .

Yet I have never known a yesterday I would remember!

VI

The Bridge

Joined flying space wall span wall
Arched dream counter flow
Made vast of small I soar up
Ejaculate stone your crest
Springing the skys height
Eased to fall flow and return

Under and over over
Gone and return gone

Exultant sky slash of stone
Never ends your water
Ease and over and under
Baffled more by nevermore
And eddied still pools
Kill and quiet currents on

Ease and strain	shades	sleeping
Rage and calm	bridged	awaking

VII

Pneuma

Nor when nor where within this serological sea
 Concepted not made, adrift down through the warm yellow waters
 iridescently
 Shifting . . . how to touch? how to recall? Recompose
 The swift motioned consciousness to slowness to drowning at last
 still closing
 Gill gasping finger down past the nerveless anemone. . . .
 At home the antimacassared chairs rock without me.
 Geraniums bloom in storm windows. All read about me
 In secondhand senses sent up from the floor of the ocean.
 Nor when nor where.

Up there on the glistening surfaces, over the eggwhite waters, two
 bodies
 Float swim laugh play forgetting the motionless deeps.
 Tendrilous I reach . . . great longshimmering fingers flowing
 To and fro . . . curve . . . miss . . . silently fall . . . O who knows
 Why were thus cast these blurring beaches' boundaries
 Nor where within this serological sea
 Nor when

VIII

Virgo, Out of Zeiss

Ah look, Olympia! Our moon,
 Swings low again in eastern skies.
 Three times this night, we've watched her lune
 Wend vacuous way before our eyes . . .
 Three times, I've kissed your flowered lips
 And felt the latex passions rise

That carried to controlled near-slips
In regions of Andromedae,
Our love, close limbed as paper clips.

For while across the space time sea,
I've lain on maidenformal breast
Surrounded by such planetry,

I may [at solstice] once request
A lover's hypodermic boon . . .
And now again upon our west,

Behold, Olympia, the moon!

IX

I, Unicorn, Father

I come upon the night's most secluded ways
Beneath the silent bleeding of cherry trees
Where Virgo lies asleep in the moonleaf shadow
Silken and warm on the water's gravel

. . . Pale lovely flesh, how much you are of decay
To share in this, our wild white infinity
Strangely to tear creation from the heavens
Cacheing it here in such mortal prisons . . .

Oh to know no more your animal staining thought
[saint macra caught in blue green gold and blood red glass, claws
as her breasts are bared and, taunting the carving roman,
is ripped from her worlds of fire and longing
is rid is essenced bound in this world of color and form]

Brief canon body you will decay . . . recede

I turn away to crush the mutinous horn
And find the womb resurgent recede Yet reseed!

X

Venus, That Night

Wash the dishes, trim and fill the lamps.
I can not stand this odor of wind flowers.
Let the baby cry. He's only damp.
Ad planned to fix the fence around the tank.
I told him to watch the boar as he went out.
Wash the dishes, trim and fill the lamps.
I heard him scream. I grabbed a coat and ran.
The neighbors too came running around the house.
Let the baby cry. He's only damp.
They brought him from the hog lot, white and limp.
They laid him on our bed. He lived one hour.
Wash the dishes, trim and fill the lamps.
They say the dead returned are evil and are damned.
Oh, still I would have him back. I am the coward.
Let the baby cry . . . he's only damp . . .
Wash the dishes, trim and fill the lamps. . .

XI

Maenad

Why come
Illusioned back from crazy sleep?
Lot's wife is happy salt. Eurydice
Made dumb
Again, crawls comfortably back into hell's cocoon.
Maude, why not sleep beneath endymal moons
In some
Nether world? You need not care
Nor bother ever to comb each serpented hair
In slumber's
Edgeless palaces you'll never
Be weary of such dress and wary of such wear.

And from
Kallikak to Kubla Khan, sweet
Elision's pleasure's palace can be
Recommended.

XII

Death Surprises A Lady

I do not think I will want to die.
I may write fine pamphlets on its recompences.
I may talk of all release, prepare condensations
Of the prayers for happy death but when it comes I will not want
to die.

See this lovely body in the water's lenses.
See the shining hair and the little breasts, and the parting where
life's mystical

Progressions do progress to the actuarial statistics,
Spring, the young blood, and the young Pole's summer cadences.

Until at last the shining hair is white and fingers knot in icicles.
It snows. The bed grows cumbersome, the world less bright,
And this body sagging in the ancient mirror is no man's sight:
... It is easiest to love the young and to die then, most political!

"Ah Eva, here you are. . . . You're tired? So am I.

Have you waited long? A sobering sleep does wonders for one's
senses.

The garden? Yes. Let's close Let's close [what with its hypocritical
waking sleeping]

The lunatic eye of the night."

Judson Jerome

Nine to Eleven

After six of us got a quart of gin
about half down and the first hand moved
for the cubes of cheese and ham and Polish
sausage it was dark enough we missed

subtleties of faces there on the porch
with the wind coming through lightly
and talked in longer sentences, our
laughs meaning more now and defining

of positions done: father, mother,
daughter, son, my wife and I, all
old enough and ready enough after half
the bottle to forget that one was this,

the other that, maneuvering done,
the way clean before us with the lake
lapping placidly, the trees just breathing,
and the way clean with still half a quart

to help us coast to anonymity
with, one said, a beautiful five-eighths moon
the only light and *it* tolerant—
so only another hour, say, before

we were talking in shorter sentences, happily
bored, having felt one another out and
one went to bed and five swam out
nude in the moonlight and we were there.

Gilbert Sorrentino

Romance de Julianesa

UP, you dogs! Get up!
or the rabies'll unhinge you!

Bring down the bear on Thursday
and on Friday—eat the meat!

CHRIST! Today—*this* makes year seven
that I stumble through this valley,

Feet unbooted, bloody;
and the toenails gush red rivers—

And I too— I gorge the raw meat
and I drink the still hot boardblood—

Heart dead: seeking little Julia:
our good emperor's little Julia . . .

Snatched away by filthy niggers
on a dawning of St. John's day.

Picking roses she was, flowers,
in the garden of her dad's place—

And . . . it's said that little Julia's
in the arms of some big nigger;

That her eyes spurt tears, spurt tears—
TEARS; go streaming down that black face!



—Arriba, canes, arriba! que rabia mala os mate!
—en jueves matays el puerco y en viernes comeys la carne.
Ay que hoy haze los siete anos que ando por este valle!
pues traygo los pies descalzos, las unas corriendo sangre,
pues como las carnes crudas, y bebo la rojo sangre,
buscando triste a Julianesa, la hija del Emperante,
pues me la han tomado moros Mananica de sant Juan,
cogiendo rosas y flores en un vergel de su padre.—
Oydolo ha Julianesa, que en brazos del moro esta:
las lagrimas de sus ojos al moro dan en la faz.

Noel Stock

Blast

*Curse those who will hang over this
Manifesto with silly canines exposed*

We need again 'Old Wyndham's' BLAST
A bulwark raised again the swarm
A voice raised up against
CONFORM CONFORM CONFORM,

In short, a difficult bastard
(not the ordinary run of 'em)
Whose verse, not only won't fit in a five foot line
but, by design,
Kicks the pants off
EVERY BLOODY ONE OF 'EM!



Sophisticated Lady

Down-turned lids,
Unseeing eyes on the up-blown smoke,
Sophisticated Lady,
Enigma in your smile, your conversation
Ellipses forever unfulfilled.

I am reminded of huge office-buildings, at night,
With their darkened windows.

Charles Shaw

Later in the Day

yesterday
the wind drove the rain
out to sea
and the sun
was a twenty-dollar gold piece
and the trees
waved their arms
like Balinese dancers
and the air was full of June ;
but later in the day
around dusk
a sudden silence fell upon the town
and everything — everywhere
was still as still
and the only sound
in all the hush
was a little nightingale
that had been singing steadily
for the past eight months
but no one
had heard it
before.

Robert Beloof

Zero

Upon Reading A History of Nihilism

No loss tonight could match,
I thought, the goodnight of children, nor the clutch
When I led their grandmother,
Who once gave love back in the teeth of weather,
Stumbling off to bed
With addled body and paranoiac head.
And then I chose this book
That reflects like a shield guilt, the hydra-headed snake
Hatching its hell of hate,
And though I could not bear to look upon it,
It was a human skull,
And horrified hands, flying toward the hilt, fell.

Man should not aver
And dispute, but "whisper results to his neighbor."
Those, as Keats, who knew
The neighbor you shouted down with bells was you
(Like that once-noble woman
Left no pride before her own grandchildren),
What could they whisper to ears
Deaf from their own pulse's thundering, to Czars,
To Nechayev, but quietly,
"It is a lie," and to die, and, dying, prove the lie.

O Michelangelo, man
Still struggles in the coil of stone.

The Bridge

I am unmoved by water gone, or where its smirch,
Downstream, nudges many another bridge.
But the bridge itself, solitary — set
Paroleless in grey pride, its ridge
Crowning corrosion with thorns of light —
For how many floodings must it assuage,
For how many shufflings must it unfret
Those winking, muttering banks with its aching arch.

Donald Finkel

Asiatic Day-Flower

One blue eye beside the path
Peers up the secret thighs
Of girls and winks in the wind. Not
Of course lewdly. However, imagine
Roots digging their nails into
The sod, and imagine also one
Eye on frail neck straining
To see what it may not touch.
(Nor I, Mister.) Under the fabric
Swiftly the thighs caress each other.
(But not I, mister, not I.
The eye inside my mind peers
And strains.)

And at my feet, heeding
Transience of flesh in his blue stare,
Beside the path the calm pornographer
Waits out the finite season of desire.

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